

SENATE HEARINGS SET ON HAVANA STRENGTH, NATURE OF WEAPONS

Probers To Look At 'Threat' To U.S. Security;
Briefing Given By Rusk And McCone;
Aiken Also Cites Rising Might

1,170 Cubans arrive in Florida by freighterPage 2

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[Washington Bureau of The Sun]

Washington, Jan. 25—Russia's continuing build-up in Cuba is "rapidly converting Castro's forces into the second most powerful military power in the hemisphere," Senator Stennis (D., Miss.) declared today.

As a consequence, the Senator announced, his Military Preparedness subcommittee will hold "formal hearings" on current military strength in Cuba and the nature of the weapons located there.

"Since these forces are controlled by the hostile rulers of Communist Russia, it is imperative that we examine carefully the military aspects of the Cuban situation from the standpoint of the threat which it poses to our security and the state of our own military preparedness to meet and counter this threat," Stennis said.

Attends Briefing

The Senator's decision was made soon after he attended a briefing by Dean Rusk, Secretary of State, and John A. McCone, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, before the Foreign Relations subcommittee on Latin America.

Senator Aiken (R., Vt.), who also listened to the Rusk-McCone testimony, said Russia is building an "enormously strong military and political base" in Cuba.

Emphasizing he was speaking for himself and not the Government, Aiken asserted that the build-up is "much stronger" than he had thought and "is continuing to grow stronger."

Neither Rusk nor McCone would comment after the briefing.

Distinction Cited

An authoritative source said, however, that the two officials sought to draw a distinction between the continuing military activity in Cuba and the kind of offensive build-up that preceded the October crisis.

Last year, it was explained, Russia stationed strategic missiles and aircraft in Cuba before President Kennedy forced their withdrawal.

This time, the source continued, no new elements have been introduced into the Soviet-Cuban military arsenal.

Soviet activities listed include the construction of launching sites for "defensive" surface-to-air missiles, the erection of barracks and the further training of four all-Russian combat units.

"Situation Is Dangerous"

Senator Aiken, a consistent critic of the Administration's Cuban policy, said late today that he did not "put too much stock" in trying to draw the line between offensive and defensive weaponry.

Insisting that all nations try to prove they are arming only for defense, Aiken said nuclear warheads could be put on smaller missiles.

"The situation is dangerous and calls for eternal watchfulness," the Vermont Republican declared.

Senator Morse (D., Ore.), chairman of the Latin America subcommittee, called today's briefing after being shown press reports of a mounting Soviet build-up in Cuba.

After receiving the Rusk-McCone testimony he announced that no further hearings would be necessary on the specific subject of the build-up reports.

"Complete Confidence"

"The American people have every reason to have complete confidence in the way this Administration is handling foreign policy matters in Cuba and elsewhere," Morse said.

He added he personally was satisfied that American intelligence is keeping itself accurately informed on all Soviet equipment going into Cuba.

The traditional rivalry between the Foreign Relations Committee and the Armed Services Committee was demonstrated once again, however, when Senator Stennis announced later that his group would look further into the situation.

The Mississippi Senator justified his decision on the ground that his subcommittee, as the investigating arm of the Armed Services Committee, is responsible for the military aspects and implications of the Cuban situation.

Stennis did not fix a specific date for the opening of his hearings, but said they would commence just as soon as the necessary staff work had been completed.

Senator Symington (D., Mo.), one of the few senators who is a member of both the Armed Services and Foreign Relations committees, joined Stennis and Aiken in voicing alarm over the Cuban situation.

He said he was worried about the high proportion of air service personnel in the Soviet military contingents stationed in Cuba.

And he contended that the country should be far more concerned over what is happening in Cuba right now than what happened during the abortive Bay of Pigs Invasion in April, 1961.

Humphrey Comments

Senator Humphrey (D., Minn.), the assistant majority leader, also insisted that a Bay of Pigs inquiry, as proposed by Senator Goldwater (R., Ariz.), would merely "open old sores" and produce no information from which the country could profit.

He said Americans should be more concerned with mounting dangers in the Caribbean—the "critical and explosive" situation in Haiti and the "considerable unrest" in Panama.

Humphrey reported that Rusk and McCone had given an account of the Cuban build-up that was essentially in line with the remarks made yesterday by President Kennedy at his press conference.

At that time the President said the best information available indicated only one ship, which may have been bearing military equipment had arrived in Cuba since the October crisis.

"No Evidence"

Mr. Kennedy added that "there is no evidence this ship carried any offensive weapons" and that in this sense there had not been a build-up of the kind which forced the United States to take action three months ago.

Emphasizing that the United States is keeping daily surveillance over Cuba, the President estimated there are 16,000 to 17,000 Soviet troops there to operate surface-to-air missiles and other complex equipment.